

USS Constitution Underway to Celebrate Independence Day

Story by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Kathryn E. Macdonald,
USS Constitution Public Affairs

BOSTON HARBOR, Mass. – USS Constitution and her crew got underway July 4 to celebrate the nation's independence from Great Britain.

The event comes as part of Boston Navy Week, June 30-July 5, and is the last major event in which Constitution's Sailors will participate.

"I may be biased, but I can't think of a finer way to conclude Boston Navy Week," said Cmdr. Timothy M. Cooper, 71st in command of Constitution. "Constitution's long and distinguished service in defense of our nation is exemplified by everything that the Fourth of July represents."

The ship departed pier-side at approximately 11 a.m. with 362 guests, but preparation for this underway began in early June.

"Making sure Constitution can safely get underway takes a lot of work," said Cooper. "In addition to our own Sailors, the employees of the Navy History and Heritage Command Detachment Boston worked extremely hard to make this possible. Furthermore, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Massachusetts State Police, the Boston Police Department and the Environmental Police all play an important role in ensuring we are able to continue this tradition."

Next, guests from the U.S. Post Office unveiled the "Distinguished Sailors" stamps. The stamps honored four Sailors who served with bravery and distinction during the 20th century: William S. Sims, Arleigh A. Burke, John McCloy and Doris "Dorie" Miller.

"When we reached out to the U.S. Navy about this stamp, they made a recommendation to do it on board the USS Constitution on the Fourth of July," said James Holland, postmaster, Boston. "Along with it being Navy Week, it seemed like the perfect venue to reach out to the community."

Sailors also taught guests about "Old Ironsides'" history. Later, they performed a 21-gun salute near Fort Independence on Castle Island. Fort Independence is a state park that served as a defense post for Boston Harbor at one time.

"I thought it was so cool, the 21-gun salute," said Lynn Smith, a guest. "It's an honor being a part of so much history. It gives so much more meaning to the Fourth of July."

Constitution performed a final 17-gun salute to the city of Boston near Coast Guard Station Boston and eventually returned pier-side at approximately 2 p.m.

Boston Navy Week is one of 20 Navy Weeks planned across America for 2010. The primary purpose of Navy Week is to increase Navy awareness by presenting the Navy to Americans who live in cities that normally do not have a significant naval presence.

Constitution is located in the Charlestown Navy Yard of Boston Harbor. She is the world's oldest

commissioned warship afloat and welcomes more than 500,000 visitors a year. For more information on Constitution, visit <http://www.history.navy.mil/ussconstitution/> or join us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/ussconstitutionofficial>.